National Federations of World Aquatics

Lausanne, 6 August 2026

Re: Commentary on the World Aquatics Competition Regulations

Dear Member Federations,

Following the amendments to the World Aquatics Competition Regulations ("CR") in February 2026, the World Aquatics Technical Swimming Committee ("TSC") received requests for clarification regarding the interpretation and application of certain provisions.

To ensure consistent application of the CR, the TSC has issued the following guidance on how these provisions should be interpreted.

Part Two: Swimming

2. Technical Officials

2.3.5 The Referee's role at the start of a race is set out in Article O of this Part Two.

Commentary: Article O is an incorrect cross-reference and should be read as written in Article 4.

2.3.6 The Referee will disqualify an Athlete for initiating the start before the starting signal if the initiation was observed and confirmed by both the Starter and the Referee. When Automatic Officiating Equipment is available, the Referee will review the relevant footage to verify the disqualification. The Referee and the Starter are not required to concur.

Commentary: In such circumstances setout in Article 2.3.6, the Referee and the Starter are not required to concur. The Referee's decision, following this review, shall be final.

3. Seeding of Heats, Semi-finals and Finals

3.2.4.4.4 In 400m, 800m, and 1500m events, the last two (2) heats of the event will be seeded in accordance with Article 3.1.3.2 of this Part Two and, if there are sufficient Athletes to form three (3) or more heats:

Commentary: Article 3.1.3.2 should be read as Article 3.2.4.2.

3.3.5 Allocation of relay teams to semi-finals and assignment of lanes will be done in accordance with Articles 3.3.1 to 3.3.4 of this Part Two, reading 'relay team' instead of 'Athlete'.

Commentary: Article 3.3.5 was included in error and will not be applied. This provision will be removed during the next annual revision of the CR, as swimming relay events governed by the CR do not include semi-finals.

5. Freestyle

5.4 Once some part of the head of the Athlete has passed the 5 metre-mark, immediately prior to reaching for the finish wall, the Athlete may be completely submerged.

Commentary: When reaching for the finish wall, the Athlete may be completely submerged once his/her head has passed the 5 metre-mark.

7. Breaststroke

7.3 *It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time, except at the turn after the touch of the wall when it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast from the beginning of the first arm stroke after leaving the wall. From the start and throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order. All movements of the arms must be simultaneous without alternating movement.*

Commentary: Athletes must not kick until they have returned past the vertical to the breast after the turn.

8. Butterfly

8.1 *From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn, the Athlete's body must be on the breast.*

Commentary: The Athlete's body must be on the breast from the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start. The reference to "after each turn" should be disregarded.

8.2 *It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time, except at the turn after the touch of the wall when it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast from the beginning of the first arm stroke after leaving the wall.*

Commentary: The Athlete's body must be on the breast after leaving the wall.

8.6.7 *It is permissible for the Athlete to be completely submerged once his/her head has passed the 5 metre-mark prior to reaching for the finish wall.*

Commentary: When reaching for the finish wall, an Athlete may be completely submerged once his/her head has passed the 5 metre-mark.

14. Swimwear, Technology and Wearables

14.2 *Other than permitted Swimwear, an Athlete must not wear or use during competition any device or swimwear that may aid his/her speed, buoyancy, or endurance (such as, for example, webbed gloves, flippers, fins, or adhesive substances).*

Commentary: "Adhesive substances" refers to glue. For the avodiance of doubt, tape and nasal strips do not constitute adhesive substances for the purposes of this rule and may be used.

14.4 *An Athlete will be permitted to use tape on one (1) or two (2) fingers or toes (including to bind together two fingers or toes) if use of the tape is required to treat or protect an injury to a finger or toe.*

Commentary: Athletes may also use tape to treat or protect injuries to other parts of the body.

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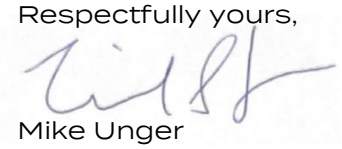
Thank you for sharing this commentary with your respective team leaders, athletes, coaches and officials. As always, if you have any questions, please contact the World Aquatics Office.

Respectfully yours,



Mike Unger
Chief Sports Officer

Copy to: Mr. Dale Neuburger (Bureau Representative – Swimming), Mr. Craig Hunter (Chair, Technical Swimming Committee), and Mr. Brent Nowicki (Executive Director)